

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

Ministry of Public Works were also on the G.P.U. payroll. Some of these agents, according to the same source, were relatives of the Minister of the Court Teymurtash, and the agent known as No. 16 was a prince of the House of Qajars. The G.P.U. scored quite a success when it engaged the services of the cipher expert of the Iranian Council of Ministers. Two Iranian consuls, in Khanaqin and in Mosul, who had served previously in Erivan (Soviet Armenia) and Nakhichevan (Soviet Azerbaijan), were also mentioned by Agabekov as G.P.U. informers, while the Iranian police chief in Tabriz was reported to have received bribes from the Tiflis G.P.U. The Iranian governor of the district of Bahar, south of Meshed, by the name of Saul as-Saltaneh was recruited by the G.P.U. to assist in smuggling arms from Russia through Afghanistan to India. Agabekov's revelations were corroborated in the main by such former Soviet diplomats as Alexander Barmine or Gregory Bessedovsky. Vincent Shecan, an American who had visited Iran in 1927 during the period described by Agabekov, wrote in this connection:

In Persia the Soviet Union interferes to an extent which would not be credible in western Europe or America. Russian agents are everywhere; Russian money pays for the most incongruous assortment of political movements, popular upheavals, dynastic flurries, tribal agitations. Most of the crop of rebellions which have been harvested by Rza Shah's seizure of the imperial crown have had legitimate and natural bases, of course; but in some of them—particularly those which have been taking place in the north, in Gilan and Mazanderan, and in the northeast, toward Turkestan—Russian influence is so obvious that it would be silly to disregard it.³⁰

It is a point of interest to note that in its activity in Iran the G.P.U.

made ample use of the Armenian minority, despite the fact that another Armenian group—the Dashnaks—was so hostile to Russia. The number of G.P.U. agents of Armenian nationality was astounding. Agabekov himself, his Teheran aide Makarian, the Tabriz resident Minossian, and several others were Armenians. It looked as if the G.P.U. had developed a special fondness for this race. Very revealing, in particular, were the G.P.U. approaches to the Armenian Orthodox hierarchy in Iran and elsewhere in the Middle East. Agabekov relates that as a principle Soviet authorities tried to win

30 The *New Persia* (New York and London, 1927), p. 212. Copyright 1927 by The Century Company. Reprinted by permission of Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc.